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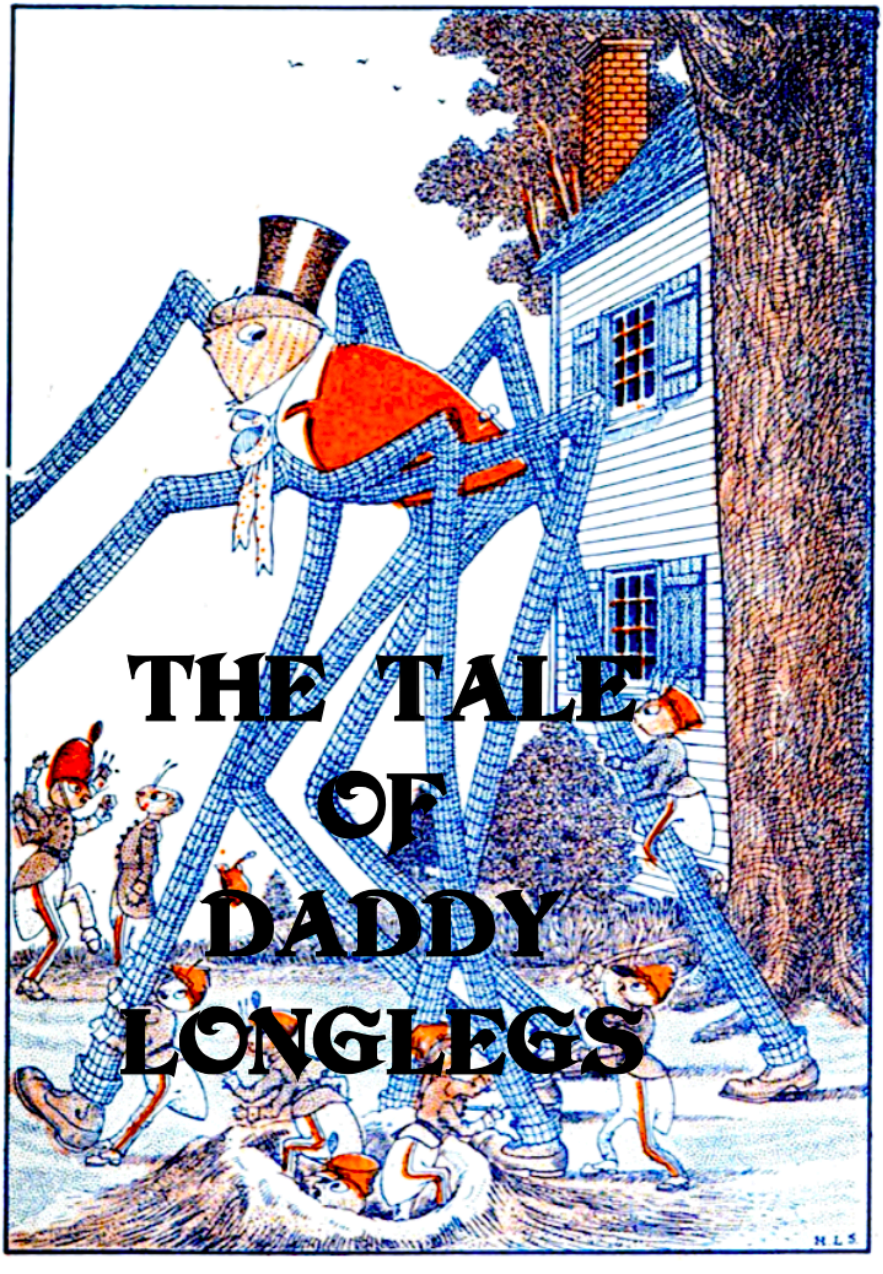

The Tale of Daddy Longlegs

By Arthur Scott Bailey

Illustrated by Harry L. Smith

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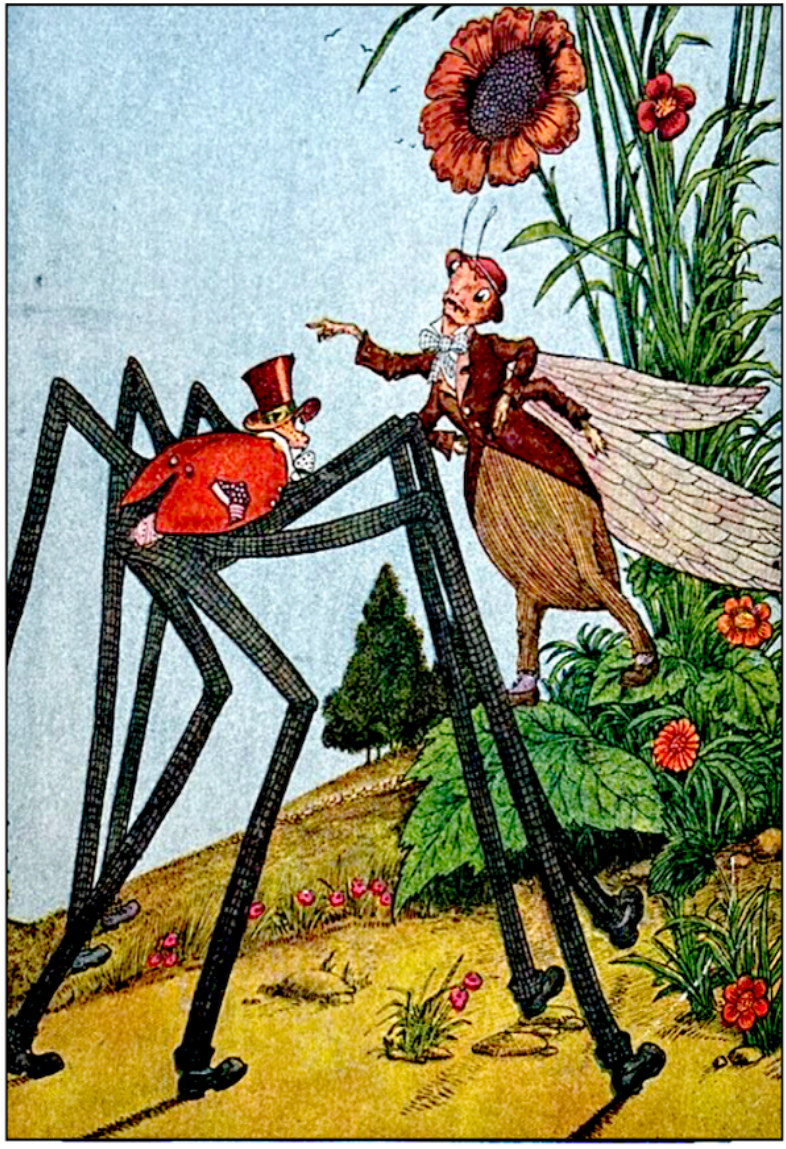

Daddy Longlegs Meets Buster Bumblebee

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THE TALE OF

DADDY LONGLEGS

I

THE STRANGE TRACKS

There was great excitement in the neighborhood of Farmer Green's house. Rusty Wren had found some strange tracks. And nobody knew whose they were.

Now, when they were puzzled like that the field- and forest-folk usually went straight to Mr. Crow for advice. But this time it happened that the old gentleman had gone on an excursion to the further side of Blue Mountain, where Brownie Beaver lived. And there seemed to be no one else at hand who was likely to be able to explain the mystery.

Being quite old, Mr. Crow was very wise. And people often sought his opinion, though later they fell into the habit of consulting Daddy Longlegs upon matters they did not understand. But this was

before Daddy was known in Pleasant Valley.

Upon hearing Rusty Wren's news a good many of his neighbors hurried to the place where Rusty had noticed the strange tracks.

"They were there in the dust of the road," Rusty Wren explained to his friends. "I could see them plainly, I assure you. And there's no doubt that a large company crossed the road right here."

"Why can't we see the tracks now?" several people wanted to know.

"A horse and wagon passed this way and spoiled the footprints," Rusty said.

"They couldn't have been very big," somebody remarked.

"Well——no!" Rusty Wren admitted. "I shouldn't call them big. But they certainly weren't as small as the footprints of an ant."

When they heard that, some of Rusty's friends looked relieved.

"We don't need to worry, anyhow," a number of them said to one another.

But there was one that was disappointed. That was Reddy Woodpecker.

"Why, the strangers—whoever they are—are too small for me to fight!" he cried. "And here I've wasted all this time for nothing at all!" He looked so angrily at Rusty Wren that Rusty felt very uneasy. He certainly didn't want Reddy Woodpecker to fight him!

Luckily Reddy did not attack Rusty. But he went away grumbling. And Rusty Wren couldn't help feeling a bit worried.

"Never mind what that rowdy says!" little Mr. Chippy advised Rusty Wren—after the quarrelsome Reddy Woodpecker had gone away. "I'm glad you told me about those strange tracks. I live near-by, in the wild grapevine on the stone wall; and I shall watch for more tracks—and those that make them, too."

"Let me know when you learn anything new!" said Rusty Wren. And Mr. Chippy said that nothing would please him more than to do just that.

Well, the very next day Mr. Chippy's son, Chippy, Jr., knocked at Rusty Wren's door (which was right beneath Farmer Green's chamber window) and told Rusty that he was wanted by the roadside at once. So Rusty flew straight to the stone wall, where he found little Mr. Chippy all aflutter. Mr. Chippy dropped quickly into the road, pointing to some tiny marks in the dust.

"Are those like the tracks you saw?" he asked.

"Yes—the very same!" cried Rusty Wren. "And now you can see for yourself that there must have been a crowd."

To his surprise Mr. Chippy shook his head.

"There was only one person——" he said —"one person with eight legs!"

"Why do you think that?" Rusty Wren asked him doubtfully.

"I don't think it. I *know* it!" Mr. Chippy replied. "I've seen the person six times today with my own eyes."

"What does he look like?" Rusty Wren inquired.

"Like nobody else I ever saw!" Mr. Chippy exclaimed. "His legs are long and thin; and his body is very small. And though his mouth makes me think of a pair of pincers, he seems quite friendly and harmless."

"What's his name?" asked Busty Wren.

"I don't know," said Mr. Chippy. "But there's only one name that fits him. I've already called him by it. And he seemed to like it, too."

"What's that?" Rusty persisted.

"Daddy Longlegs!" said little Mr. Chippy.

II

THE NEW NEIGHBOR

All the neighbors began to call him "Daddy Longlegs." And anyone might naturally think that he had lived in Pleasant Valley a great many years. But it was not so. Late in the summer Daddy Longlegs had appeared from nobody knew where.

Although people often inquired where his old home was, he always pretended that he didn't hear them—and began to talk about the weather.

And as for Daddy Longlegs' new home in Pleasant Valley, nobody knew much about that either. No matter how curious

anyone might be, it did him no good at all to ask Daddy Longlegs where he lived.

When prying persons put that question to him, Daddy Longlegs always waved his eight legs in every direction and answered "Over there!"

Of course such a reply told nothing to anyone. And it led to a good many disputes among Daddy Longlegs' neighbors. No two could ever agree as to which of Daddy's legs really pointed toward the place where he dwelt.

Anyhow, the wily gentleman was frequently seen scrambling about the stone wall by the roadside, near Farmer Green's house. And little Mr. Chippy, who made his home in the wild grapevine that grew on the wall, always claimed that Daddy Longlegs was a neighbor of his.

"He's a good neighbor, too," Mr. Chippy told his friends. "He's very quiet and he never quarrels. And he's always pleasant and ready for a chat. It's too bad that he's deaf. I've asked him at least a dozen times how old he is; but he never seems to hear me."

Old Mr. Crow, who liked nothing better than prying into other people's affairs, slowly shook his head at that. And coughing slightly he remarked in a hoarse voice that there must be *reasons* why Daddy Longlegs wouldn't tell where he came from, nor where he was living, nor how old he was.

But Mr. Crow wouldn't say what he thought might be the reasons. Although he was a wise bird, there were some things he didn't know.

Now, in a way Mr. Crow was right. Daddy Longlegs had the best of reasons for keeping some facts to himself. In the first place, he had never lived anywhere except in Pleasant Valley. In the second place, he was scarcely more than two months old when people began to notice him in the neighborhood of the stone wall. And in the third place, since he was somewhat timid he thought it just as well if people didn't know where he made his home.

He was—as his friends often said—an odd person. For instance, he had always *looked*

old, from the very first. And when everyone began to call him "Daddy" it was only to be expected that he would not care to let people know that he was not even a year old—instead of ninety or a hundred, as they supposed. Besides, probably nobody would have believed the truth. So he never told his age.

Indeed, there were some who claimed that Daddy Longlegs must be much more than only a hundred years old. They thought that his queer, tottering walk alone was enough to show his great age.

But it is not strange that his walk seemed a bit uncertain. When a person has eight feet it is to be expected that he will have a little trouble managing them. It is to be expected that he will sometimes find himself trying to walk off in several different directions at the same time.

III

MR. CROW IS DISPLEASED

Daddy Longlegs had such pleasant manners that it was no time at all before his neighbors agreed that he was a good old soul. And everybody was glad to claim him as a friend.

At least, everybody but Mr. Crow! Mr. Crow soon found that people were asking Daddy's advice on all sorts of questions (because they thought he was very old—and therefore very wise). And Mr. Crow at once became so jealous that he didn't know what to do. He began making unkind remarks about his new rival, saying that no matter how old a person might be, if he had a small head and eight long legs it was not reasonable to believe that he could have much of a brain. Whenever anybody mentioned Daddy's name, Mr. Crow would

haw-haw loudly and mutter something about "old Spindley Legs!"

Mr. Crow had spent many summers in Pleasant Valley. And during that time he had advised thousands of his neighbors. Indeed, he often boasted that if he had a kernel of corn for every bit of advice he had given away, he never would have to wonder where he was going to get his next meal.

When some friend of Mr. Crow's repeated that speech to Daddy Longlegs, he observed that Mr. Crow must be very wise.

"No doubt——" he added in his thin, quavering voice—"no doubt Mr. Crow's help would be worth a kernel of corn to anybody who was in trouble. If his advice was good, no one would object to paying for it. And if it proved to be bad, no one would miss a kernel of corn."

It happened that Daddy Longlegs' comment soon reached the ears of old Mr. Crow. And it made that gentleman furious.

"This is the first time anybody has suggested that my advice is not always

first-class!" he croaked. "Here's this long-legged upstart interfering in my affairs. I must teach him a lesson!" Mr. Crow declared.

Well, that very afternoon he challenged Daddy Longlegs to a contest.

"I intend to prove," said Mr. Crow, "that my advice is always good; and that yours is always bad."

"Very well!" Daddy Longlegs answered. "But I advise you to go home at once, Mr. Crow. You're very hoarse. And I'm sure you ought to be in bed."

Now, the old gentleman was always hoarse. And since he disliked to have anyone mention his infirmity, his eyes snapped angrily.

"I advise you——" he roared——"I advise you to keep your advice to yourself."

Of course that was a rude speech. But Daddy Longlegs did not take offense at it. He straightway told Mr. Crow that he ought to wear rubbers. And Mr. Crow was

so enraged that he couldn't speak for as much as half an hour.

It was understood that the contest between Daddy and Mr. Crow would take place the following morning. And when that time came a big crowd had gathered upon the stone wall to see the fun.

IV

THE CONTEST

My cousin, Jasper Jay, has kindly consented to ask us some questions," Mr. Crow informed Daddy Longlegs. "And he will decide which of us makes the wiser answers."

Buster Bumblebee, who was watching and listening, said:

"That's hardly fair, it seems to me."

But old Mr. Crow quickly told him that he was a stupid fellow and that he'd better keep still. And since a good many other people had frequently said the same thing to that young gentleman, Buster began to think there might be some truth in it. So he said nothing more.

Meanwhile Daddy Longlegs beamed upon all the company. And Mr. Crow looked at him out of the corner of his eye. Then he said to Daddy, "I suppose you've no objection to this plan?"

"It suits me very well," Daddy replied.

"I thought it would," said old Mr. Crow with a smirk. And turning to his cousin, Jasper Jay, he remarked in a low voice that Daddy Longlegs was even duller than he had imagined.

Then Jasper Jay announced that he would put the first question. And after he had heard Mr. Crow's opinion he would listen to Daddy Longlegs'.

"When is the best time to plant corn?" Jasper then asked Mr. Crow, while the whole company craned their necks and strained their ears—for of course they didn't want to miss anything.

Mr. Crow made no answer for a few moments. He appeared to be thinking deeply. But at last he looked up and said:

"The best time to plant corn is as early as possible."

A good many of those present exclaimed at once that that was a good answer. And a few clapped their hands.

"What's your opinion?" Jasper Jay then asked, turning to Daddy Longlegs.

Daddy Longlegs took off his hat, mopped his narrow forehead with his red bandanna, and then slowly nodded his head three times.

"My answer is exactly the same as Mr. Crow's," he piped in his queer, thin, high voice.

At that a look of displeasure passed quickly over the faces of the two cousins. And when little Mr. Chippy called on Jasper Jay to decide which was the better answer, Jasper looked really worried.

"It's a tie this time," he said somewhat sourly. And while everybody was shouting, he and Mr. Crow withdrew to one side and

whispered, which some considered to be rather bad manners.

Soon Jasper and Mr. Crow returned to the eager throng. And Jasper now looked as brazen as ever.

"I'll put the next question," he announced. "And Daddy Longlegs may answer first.... How many kernels of corn make a meal!"

There wasn't a sound—except for Buster Bumblebee's buzzing—as Daddy Longlegs moved forward a few steps and held his hand behind his ear.

"Speak louder!" somebody said to Jasper. "You know he's hard of hearing."

So Jasper Jay repeated the question. But Daddy Longlegs only looked at him blankly.

It was quite clear that he couldn't understand a single word that Jasper said.

V

TOO MANY QUESTIONS

This is strange!" old Mr. Crow exclaimed, looking very hard at Daddy Longlegs. "You heard the first question easily enough. But now you seem deaf as a post."

And all the time Daddy Longlegs merely smiled at Mr. Crow. He made no comment at all.

"Don't you know what I'm saying?" Mr. Crow bawled in his loudest tones.

"It *is* a pleasant day," said Daddy Longlegs. "But I'm afraid there's going to be a heavy gale to-morrow."

"This is certainly peculiar," Mr. Crow grumbled. And then little Mr. Chippy hastened to explain that Daddy Longlegs

was often like that. He would appear to hear you perfectly one moment. And then—if you happened to ask him his age, or where he came from—you might find him unable to understand a single word that you said.

"It's most unfortunate," said old Mr. Crow. "I see nothing to do but reply to the question myself. And then my cousin, Jasper Jay, will decide which has given the better answer—Daddy Longlegs or I."

"Ah! But you can't do that!" cried Daddy Longlegs suddenly. "Jasper Jay said you were not to answer this question until after I had. And you know you mustn't break the rules of the contest."

Old Mr. Crow's mouth fell open, he was so astonished.

"Why, he can hear again!" he exclaimed. And after staring at Daddy Longlegs for a while he beckoned to Jasper Jay. And again the two cousins moved a little distance away and began whispering.

Daddy Was Frightened by Sandy Chipmunk

When they returned both were smiling broadly. And mounting the stone wall once more, Jasper said that he would put another question to Daddy and Mr. Crow, and that they must both answer it at the same time. Then he cautioned Daddy Longlegs to speak up good and loud, because Mr. Crow had a strong voice.

"I'd suggest——" said Daddy Longlegs ——"I'd suggest that Mr. Crow speak as softly as possible, because my voice is weak."

"That's only fair!" all the company agreed, nodding their heads to one another. But Mr. Crow appeared peevish.

"Everybody's against me," he grumbled. "I almost believe," he said, turning to his cousin, "I almost believe they're all in league with Farmer Green."

"If you are not sure, why don't you ask Farmer Green himself?" Daddy Longlegs inquired.

"I will!" cried Mr. Crow in a loud voice. "I'll ask him the next time I see him."

"Then you can ask him now," said Daddy Longlegs, "for here he comes, with a gun on his shoulder."

The words were hardly out of Daddy's mouth when old Mr. Crow began to beat the air furiously with his broad wings. He rose quickly—but not too high—and made for the woods as fast as he could fly.

"Now, that's strange!" Daddy Longlegs quavered. "I don't see how he's going to talk with Farmer Green when he's half a mile away from him."

And everybody else said the same thing.

"He's gone off and left the contest unfinished," little Mr. Chippy observed. "So there's nothing Jasper Jay can do except to declare that Daddy Longlegs is the winner —and the wisest person in Pleasant Valley."

"I couldn't very well do that," Jasper objected. "You're forgetting Solomon Owl."

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Daddy Longlegs Could Not Hide From Mrs. Ladybug

"Well, Daddy's wiser than old Mr. Crow, anyhow," Mr. Chippy retorted. And since almost everybody said that was true, Jasper Jay didn't quite dare object.

But it was plain that he didn't agree with the company. And he stamped his feet and clashed his bill together and shook his head as if he were much displeased.

He, too, began to believe—with his cousin, Mr. Crow—that Daddy Longlegs and all the others were on Farmer Green's side.

VI

MRS. LADYBUG'S PLAN

Daddy Longlegs' neighbors took an even greater interest in him, after his contest with Mr. Crow. And much to Daddy's distress they tried harder than before to pry into his private affairs. But those curious busybodies learned very little. In fact there was only one of them who really found out anything about Daddy that was worth knowing.

Little Mrs. Ladybug, who was somewhat of a gossip, discovered in some way that Daddy Longlegs was a harvestman. And she lost no time in spreading the news far and wide. She even travelled as far as the big poplar, to tell Whiteface, the Carpenter Bee, what she had heard.

"A harvestman, eh?" said the Carpenter, thrusting his hands into the pockets of his apron. "If that's so, why doesn't he go to work?" And without waiting for an answer he dodged quickly inside his house. He was building an addition to his

home; and naturally he was quite busy. He knew, too, that Mrs. Ladybug was a terrible talker.

"I declare, I hadn't thought of that!" Mrs. Ladybug exclaimed. And then she hastened to the stone wall to find Daddy Longlegs and learn the answer to the Carpenter's question.

Mrs. Ladybug soon spied Daddy, coming from the orchard near-by. And since she saw him before he saw her, he had no chance to hide. He was sorry; for he *just knew,* from the look in her eye, that she was going to ask him a question. And sure enough, she did!

"You're a harvestman," she began, quite out of breath from hurrying. "Why don't you go to work?"

"What can I do?" Daddy inquired with a blank look.

"Do!" she exclaimed. "I should think Farmer Green would be glad to have your help in harvesting his crops. He's mowing his oats now. And there's no one to help him except the hired man, unless you count Johnnie, and *he* spends most of his time at the swimming-hole."

Daddy Longlegs thanked Mrs. Ladybug politely for her suggestion. But he said that he was not acquainted with Farmer Green. And he disliked working for strangers. And he thought he would spend the rest of the summer making friends with his neighbors.

"Next year," he told her, "I may make some arrangement with Farmer Green to work for him regularly."

But that answer did not satisfy little Mrs. Ladybug in the least.

"You'd be far better off with something steady to do," she insisted. And she said so much that just to get rid of her Daddy

Longlegs promised to see Farmer Green at once and offer his services.

He was sorry, as soon as she had gone, that he had agreed to do that. But being a person of his word he never once thought of not keeping his promise, though he wished he had simply put his hand behind his ear and not answered Mrs. Ladybug's question at all.

But it was too late, then, to do that.

VII

TRYING TO HELP

It was true that Farmer Green had almost more work than he could do just then, even with the aid of the hired man and Johnnie. And he often wished that he might find somebody else to help him.

"I'd hire anybody I could find that had two legs," he remarked to his wife as he started away from the house after finishing his dinner. "I want to get the oats harvested before there's a rain. And I don't like the looks of the sky to-day."

Now, Daddy Longlegs reached the farmhouse just in time to hear what Farmer Green said. And he spoke up at once—as loudly as he could.

"I'd be willing to work for you," he said. "I'm a harvestman. And you ought to be glad to hire me, for I have eight legs instead of only two."

Perhaps Daddy's voice was too thin and high for Farmer Green to hear. Anyhow, he paid not the slightest heed to Daddy's offer, but strode off across the farmyard while his caller cried "Stop! Please stop!" at the top of his lungs.

Then Daddy heard a noise, which he was sure was thunder, though it was only Farmer Green calling to the hired man to hurry.

"Well, I've tried to go to work, anyhow," Daddy Longlegs assured himself. "And if the oats get wet Farmer Green can't blame me."

He went back to the stone wall then. And seeing Mr. Chippy perched on the wild grapevine, Daddy told him what had happened. "Farmer Green must be deaf at times, the same as you are," little Mr.

Chippy observed. "If I were you I'd write him a letter."

Daddy Longlegs pretended not to hear Mr. Chippy's suggestion. The truth was, being only a few months old Daddy did not know how to write. But of course he did not care to have Mr. Chippy know that.

Well, while he pondered upon the situation Daddy Longlegs changed his mind about working for Farmer Green. In the beginning he had not wanted to help with the harvesting. He had taken up Mrs. Ladybug's suggestion only to keep her quiet. But now, having found that going to work for Farmer Green was no easy matter to arrange, Daddy Longlegs began to long to do the very thing he had wished to avoid.

At last he decided that he would go over to the oat field at once and do what he could to help with the harvesting, without saying anything more to anybody.

"Farmer Green can't help but be pleased," he thought, as he started off across the farmyard in the same direction in which

Johnnie Green's father had gone when he called to the hired man to hurry.

Daddy had not gone far before he met Buster Bumblebee. "How far is it to the oat field?" Daddy asked him.

"Oh! It's not ten minutes' journey," said Buster. "I've just come from the clover-patch myself; and that's twice as far."

Daddy Longlegs thanked him. And then he turned and tottered on again. For a long time he walked as fast as he could. It seemed to him that he must have been travelling at least half an hour. But he saw not the slightest sign of the oat field, though he climbed a fence and peered across the rolling meadow.

Then he happened to catch sight of Chirpy Cricket hopping through the grass. And Daddy called to him and asked him how far it was to the oat field.

"It's a good half-day's journey from here," said Chirpy Cricket cheerfully. But Daddy Longlegs did not feel the least bit cheerful when he heard that.

"For the land's sake!" he exclaimed. "Are you sure you're not mistaken? Buster Bumblebee told me a long time ago that it was only a ten-minute trip."

"Ah! So it is—for him!" said Chirpy Cricket. "You must remember that he flies very fast. But I have to hop along much more slowly. And as for you, at the pace you were travelling before you stopped to speak to me you wouldn't reach the oat field before to-morrow morning! No—not even if you walked all night!"

VIII

IN NEED OF NEW SHOES

Daddy Longlegs couldn't help feeling discouraged when Chirpy Cricket told him that he wouldn't be able to reach the oat field before the next morning.

"I declare," he said, "if I had known it was such a long journey I wouldn't have tried to go there to help Farmer Green with his harvesting. I've already walked so far that my shoes are all worn out. And I can neither go on nor go back until I get some new ones." He looked very doleful—for he didn't know what to do. But Chirpy Cricket laughed merrily, as was his custom.

"Cheer up!" he cried. "You're in luck! Jimmy Rabbit has a shoe shop in this very meadow. Just follow me and I'll show you where it is!"

So off they went. And soon they arrived at the shoe shop, in front of which they found Jimmy Rabbit all smiles and bows.

"Here's a friend of mine who needs some new shoes," Chirpy Cricket announced.

"Come right in!" cried Jimmy Rabbit. "Any friend of Chirpy Cricket's is a friend of mine too. And if I can't fit your feet with shoes it won't be my fault. Only yesterday I sold a pair of shoes to old Mr. Crow. And his feet are enormous, as every one knows."

"Well, I want more than just *one* pair," Daddy Longlegs piped up. "I want four—making eight shoes in all.

And I flatter myself that my feet are very small," he added.

Jimmy Rabbit looked a bit surprised at that remark. He was not accustomed to seeing eight-legged people in his shop. But he made no comment, though he couldn't help staring at his new customer.

Meanwhile Chirpy Cricket had hopped away, after telling Daddy that he was

leaving him in good hands. And then Jimmy Rabbit went to work briskly. He began setting shoes of all sorts and sizes before Daddy Longlegs. And soon he was not only placing them in front of Daddy, but on both sides of him—and behind him as well.

Jimmy Rabbit was so spry, and most of the shoes were so big, that in no time at all Daddy Longlegs was completely surrounded by a wall of shoes, which rapidly grew higher and higher.

"Stop! stop!" cried Daddy Longlegs. But Jimmy Rabbit was so busy that he didn't hear him. And he kept piling more and more shoes around his tiny visitor, until Daddy Longlegs was lost in a small mountain of big, little, and medium-sized shoes of many different colors.

Not till then did Jimmy Rabbit pause for breath. And when he saw that his customer had disappeared he was more than surprised.

"Where can he have gone?" Jimmy exclaimed. "I didn't see him go out. He was sitting right here only a moment ago. And now he's certainly not in my shop."

Even at that very moment Daddy Longlegs was frantically crying "Help! help!" But his thin, weak voice was quite muffled by the great heap of shoes that buried him.

After waiting for a few minutes Jimmy Rabbit closed—and locked—his door, and went skipping off to Farmer Green's garden, where the cabbages grew.

IX

LOCKED IN!

Poor Daddy Longlegs! Buried as he was under dozens of shoes—all of them many times bigger than he was—he couldn't help being alarmed when he heard Jimmy Rabbit walk out of the shoe shop and lock the door behind him.

Daddy wished that he had told Mrs. Ladybug in the beginning that he wouldn't help Farmer Green with his harvesting. Then he would never have started on his long journey to the oat field and worn out his shoes. And if he hadn't worn out his shoes, of course he would never have visited Jimmy Rabbit's shoe shop and got himself into such terrible trouble.

He soon saw that he might call for help until his voice was cracked worse than ever

without its doing him the least bit of good. So he stopped shouting and began to climb out of the pile of shoes that surrounded him. And he was very glad, then, that he had eight long legs to help him. But when he found himself free of the shoes he seemed but little better off than before. There he was, a prisoner in the shoe shop! And the daylight was fast fading.

If Daddy Longlegs had been half as wise as his neighbors believed him he wouldn't have stayed in his prison two minutes. But after trying the door and the two windows and finding that he couldn't open them he made up his mind that there was nothing for him to do except to wait until Jimmy Rabbit came back the following day.

And there was the chimney all the time! Daddy Longlegs could have crawled up it just as easily as Santa Claus could have crept down it! But because he had never left anybody's house or shop by way of the chimney, Daddy Longlegs never once thought of doing such a thing.

And his thinking that Jimmy Rabbit wouldn't come back until the next morning shows that Daddy knew very little about the ways of his neighbors. Almost anybody else would have been sure that Jimmy Rabbit would keep his shoe shop open at night, because he was always wider awake after dark. And many others of the field-people were exactly like him in that respect.

Daddy Longlegs had been sleeping

soundly for some time—inside the toe of a shoe—when the sound of voices awakened him. At first he kept very still. Being naturally a timid person he did not want to show himself until he was sure he was safe from harm.

And then, before he realized what was happening, he felt himself picked up—shoe and all—and he heard Jimmy Rabbit say, "Try on this shoe, Peter Mink!"

Since there was no doubt—the next instant—that Peter Mink was thrusting his foot

into Daddy's hiding-place, there was only one thing for Daddy to do. Knowing that he was in great danger of being crushed, he withdrew into the very tip of the shoe. And luckily for him, Peter Mink's toes did not quite reach him.

After that Daddy Longlegs could hear nothing more; nor did he know what was happening. But to make a long story short, Jimmy Rabbit gave Peter Mink another shoe—for Peter's other foot—and bowed his customer politely out of his shop.

After that Jimmy Rabbit promptly locked the door again. But this time he locked himself *in* instead of *out*. You see, he never felt safe in Peter Mink's company.

Naturally, Jimmy locked Daddy Longlegs out of the shop, too, though he didn't know it.

And there Peter Mink stood in the moon-lit meadow, with his new shoes on his feet, and with Daddy Longlegs hidden in the toe of his right shoe.

But no matter if it *was* the right shoe, Daddy Longlegs thought it was all wrong.

X

RIDE BY MOONLIGHT

It was not exactly a pleasant ride that Daddy Longlegs had in the toe of Peter Mink's shoe. Not only was it dark pocket inside the shoe, but it was so cramped that Daddy was most uncomfortable. And what was still worse, he hadn't even the faintest idea where he was going.

Sometimes Daddy was almost sure that Peter Mink was carrying him around Blue Mountain. And at other times he thought that Peter must be following Swift River—to see where it went, perhaps. Anyhow, Daddy suffered such a

pitching and tossing and tumbling and jouncing as he had never known in all his life.

Then at last, to Daddy's great relief, Peter Mink kept quite still for a long time.

That was when Peter burrowed into a haystack to take a nap. And since it was then many hours past Daddy Longlegs' regular bedtime, he went to sleep too. But he awoke with a great start when Peter Mink crawled out of his shelter about dawn. And at first Daddy couldn't imagine what was happening. But after he had been bounced about a bit he remembered the terrible accident that had happened to him in Jimmy Rabbit's shoe shop in the meadow.

Suddenly Peter Mink stopped. And to Daddy Longlegs' great delight Peter began to take off his shoes.

Yes! Peter Mink removed his shoes. And then he removed himself. That is to say, he dropped his shoes carelessly upon the ground (for that was his way!) and took himself off.

Daddy Longlegs waited until Peter Mink had stolen away. And then he dashed out of

the shoe much faster than he had entered it the evening before.

Yes; the evening before! For now it was the following morning—and broad daylight.

Daddy Longlegs stretched his eight legs, first one after another, and then all together. He was so glad to escape from his cramped quarters that he had little thought for anything except the joy of being free once more.

Then he remembered all at once that he was lost. And that was enough to start his eight legs to shaking beneath him in a very unpleasant fashion. Daddy Longlegs was frightened. Anybody could have seen that.

After a few moments he looked about him, wondering which way he had better go. And as he gazed at his surroundings he saw —not far off—a familiar looking object.

At first Daddy could scarcely believe his eyes. And he looked steadily at what he saw, as if he half expected it would fly away and vanish.

But the object did nothing of the kind. And how could it, anyhow? Because it was Farmer Green's house that had caught Daddy Longlegs' eye.... And there stood the great barn too, a little way off! And there was the bridge across Swift River!

Without knowing what he was doing, Peter Mink had brought Daddy Long legs almost home. And then he had taken off his shoes because he wanted to go for a swim in the duck pond, in the hope of catching an eel for his breakfast.

Well, Daddy Longlegs lost no time in making his way back to the stone wall by the roadside. And the first person he met there was no other than little Mrs. Ladybug, who seemed delighted to see him and asked him how he liked working for Farmer Green.

"Yes! It's a fine day," said Daddy Longlegs. "The rain is holding off. And it looks as if Farmer Green was going to get his oats harvested without their being wet, after all."

"I see you're deaf to-day," Mrs. Ladybug observed in a pitying tone. "It's a shame. And Farmer Green ought to be very grateful to you for your help."

"He hasn't said a word to me," Daddy Longlegs told her. And Mrs. Ladybug declared she couldn't understand it.

But there were many other things, too, that she didn't understand. She had heard that Daddy was a harvestman. But she didn't know that some people called him by that name merely because he was seen in Pleasant Valley about the time Farmer Green harvested his crops. As for working in the fields, Daddy Longlegs knew no more about that than did that fat drone, Buster Bumblebee. And Farmer Green would have laughed heartily at the idea of either of them helping him.

XI

THE BIG WIND

For several days after his unlucky journey across the meadow, when he tried to reach the field where Farmer Green was harvesting his oats, Daddy Longlegs did not wander far from the stone wall.

But one day Rusty Wren told him that his cousin, Long Bill Wren, was going to give a party at his house in the reeds on the bank of Black Creek. And although he had not been invited to the party, Daddy Longlegs thought it would be pleasant to go to it.

Accordingly he started off at once, though the party was not to take place until the afternoon of the following day. But Daddy Longlegs knew that he was a slow walker—and Black Creek was a long distance away.

Now, it was a fine, beautiful morning when Daddy set forth on his journey. And he travelled steadily all day long without meeting with an adventure of any sort.

When night came he crept inside an old fallen tree-trunk. And he went to sleep feeling very happy, because he was thinking what a good time he was going to have at the party the next afternoon.

But when morning came, and Daddy Longlegs crawled out of the hollow tree to continue his journey, he had a great disappointment. The moment he thrust his head out of his hiding-place he knew that he was in trouble. And he saw at once that he would have to miss Rusty Wren's cousin's party, because he certainly couldn't go on, with the weather as it was.

Yet the sun was shining brightly. And there was scarcely a cloud to be seen in the sky.

A person might naturally wonder, then, what Daddy Longlegs could have found to worry him. It wasn't raining. And it

certainly wasn't snowing, because it was not much later than midsummer.

Nevertheless Daddy Longlegs looked upon the fields with a most mournful face.

"I can't travel in this terrible wind!" he muttered. "If I had known there was going to be such a blow I would never have left home."

And now you know what Daddy's trouble was. With his small body raised so high in the air by his long, thin legs he always found it hard to walk when the wind was blowing a gale. The strong gusts buffeted him about so that he pitched and tossed like a chip on the mill pond when its surface was ruffled. And Daddy had learned quite early in his life to seek some sheltered spot on windy days, venturing forth only when the air was calmer.

Of course it was never any too pleasant, to be obliged to lie low like that, when there were a hundred things he wanted to do. But it was much worse to be caught far away from home in a terrible gale. Not only

was there no knowing how long he would have to stay hidden in the fallen tree before he dared begin his long homeward journey, but he had no one with whom he could talk. And it had always been Daddy's custom to spend gusty days as agreeably as possible by gossiping with his neighbors.

Besides, there was the party on the bank of Black Creek! Daddy Longlegs knew right away that it was useless for him to try to attend it. And so it was no wonder that he felt unhappy.

XII

GOOD NEWS ON A BAD DAY

For a long time Daddy Longlegs lay inside the hollow, fallen tree and looked out upon the wind-swept fields. If the stone wall hadn't been so far away he would certainly have tried to return home. But the weather was altogether too dangerous. He knew it would be risky to attempt so long a journey.

As he sat looking out of the chink in the old tree, through which he had crept inside it, Daddy suddenly saw a reddish, brownish flash flicker past the opening.

"Goodness!" he exclaimed. "I wonder what that was!" And in another moment the same bright patch of color again whisked across the hole.

Then Daddy Longlegs heard a sound as of some one scratching upon the tree-trunk. And being of a very curious nature, he crawled half through the hole and peered out to see what was happening. Daddy Longlegs was all ready for a fright. He was so upset, on account of being caught away

Daddy Was Frightened By Sandy Chipmunk

from home on a windy day, that he was unusually jumpy and fidgety. But—as it often happens at such times—he met with a pleasant surprise. For there sat Sandy Chipmunk, with his long tail curled over his back, and something very like a smile on his bright face.

Knowing that Sandy Chipmunk never harmed anybody that minded his own affairs, Daddy Longlegs spoke to him at once.

"It's a bad day, isn't it?" he called.

Hearing that tiny voice, which seemed to come from inside the fallen tree, Sandy Chipmunk was so startled that he leaped

high into the air; and when he came down again upon all fours he found himself staring straight into Daddy Longlegs' beady eyes.

"Oh! It's you, eh?" cried Sandy Chipmunk. And he looked decidedly foolish, because he knew that he had no reason to fear anybody as mild as Daddy Longlegs.

"It's a bad day, isn't it!" said Daddy Longlegs once more.

"I'm sorry I can't agree with you," Sandy replied. "I think it's the finest weather that ever was."

"You don't mean to say you like this wind?" Daddy Longlegs cried. "Why, I don't see how you dare to be out in it!"

"Oh, it's nothing when you're used to it," Sandy Chipmunk answered lightly.

"I shall never get used to the wind, I'm afraid," Daddy told him sadly. "It blows me about so terribly." And he went on to explain how he had started on a long journey the day before, and how he didn't

dare go on—nor turn around and go home, either.

"Well, well!" Sandy Chipmunk exclaimed. "You seem to be in a fix. But why don't you *ride* home?"

"Ride?" Daddy Longlegs shrilled. "On what, I should like to know?"

"On Farmer Green's wagon!" Sandy told him promptly. "I happen to know that Johnnie Green and his grandmother drove to the miller's this morning to have a sack of wheat ground into flour. And they'll be coming back home this afternoon."

XIII

A DANGEROUS BUSINESS

Sandy Chipmunk did not tell Daddy Longlegs how he had been tied up in the sack of wheat and had had a ride in the wagon himself. He did not like riding in wagons. And he had been so glad to escape from the sack and jump into the bushes by the roadside that he had stopped to dance on Daddy's tree before scampering back home.

His suggestion took Daddy Longlegs by surprise. At first he felt a bit timid about riding in a wagon. But Sandy Chipmunk assured him it was not half as bad as it was said to be.

"Is it far to the road?" Daddy asked him.

"Not if you hurry," Sandy told him. "If you start now you surely ought to be able to reach the road by the time old Ebenezer passes this field."

"Ebenezer! Who's he?" Daddy inquired.

"Oh! He's the horse that draws the wagon you're going to ride in," Sandy Chipmunk explained.

Daddy Longlegs thought deeply for a few minutes—or as deeply as anybody could who had so small a head as he. And then he said:

"I'll try your plan, for I want to go home. But it's very dangerous for me to do so much walking on such a windy day as this."

"Come on!" cried Sandy. "I'll show you the way to the road." And having started Daddy in the right direction, he hastened off to the road himself, to wait for the wagon.

Sandy waited by the roadside for a long, long time. And while he was lingering there, Daddy Longlegs was battling with

the wind and having hard work to keep his feet. But by hurrying along fences, and dodging behind bowlders and bushes and every other sort of shelter that he could find, Daddy managed to reach the roadside at last, where he arrived quite out of breath.

"Hurrah!" Sandy Chipmunk shouted, as soon as Daddy joined him. "Here you are—and you're just in time! For there's the wagon rattling down the next hill. And old Ebenezer (that's the horse, please remember!) he'll climb this rise as fast as he can, because he's in a hurry to get home."

"He can't be half as anxious to reach home as I am," Daddy Longlegs remarked. "And if he doesn't go his fastest after I'm aboard the wagon I hope Johnnie Green will whip him hard."

"Johnnie can't do that," said Sandy Chipmunk. "His father won't let him have a whip."

"Well, he could cut a switch, I should think!" Daddy Longlegs exclaimed.

But Sandy shook his head.

"Johnnie's grandmother wouldn't let him do that," he replied. "But you don't need to worry. You'll get home soon enough."

Soon the two watchers saw the old horse Ebenezer come jogging up the road. And then Sandy Chipmunk said something that sent Daddy Longlegs into a flutter of excitement.

"Here they come!" cried Sandy.

"You'd better stand right in the middle of the road, so you'll be sure to stop them."

And the mere thought of doing such a dangerous thing as that made Daddy Longlegs turn quite pale.

XIV

ONE WAY TO STOP A HORSE

Every one of Daddy Longlegs' eight knees began to shake, when Sandy Chipmunk told him to stand in the middle of the road, in order to stop the old horse Ebenezer, who was pulling the wagon in which Johnnie Green and his grandmother were riding.

"I can't do that!" Daddy shrieked, shrinking away from the dusty road. "I'm so small that they wouldn't see me and the first thing I'd know I'd be run over.... You'll have to stop the wagon for me—you're so much bigger than I am."

But Sandy Chipmunk said he didn't like to speak to Johnnie Green, on account of a little trouble he had had with Johnnie's father over a letter.

"Can't you wave your tail at him?" Daddy Longlegs besought him. "That wouldn't be *speaking* to him, you know. Wave your tail at Johnnie Green until he stops the horse; and then you can run away, if you want to. And while the horse is standing still I'll scramble into the wagon, without anybody seeing me."

Now, Sandy Chipmunk was a good-natured person. And he saw that unless the wagon was stopped, Daddy Longlegs was going to be terribly disappointed. So he told Daddy that he would do what he could to help him.

Then Sandy leaped nimbly to the edge of the watering-trough at one side of the road and began waving his tail backwards and forwards, like a flag.

"That's right!" Daddy Longlegs shouted approvingly. "But I wish you'd wave a little harder. I'm afraid they won't see you."

So Sandy Chipmunk redoubled his efforts. And he wagged his tail so hard that before he knew what was happening he had lost

his footing, slipped off the edge of the trough, and found himself floundering in the water.

Daddy Longlegs was watching the wagon so anxiously that he never noticed what was happening to his friend. But he observed that Johnnie Green began to laugh. And pointing toward the watering-trough Johnnie cried, "Oh! look, Grandma —look!"

The old horse Ebenezer, too, seemed interested in what was going on. Anyhow, he swerved to the right and walked straight up to the trough. And the wagon came to a halt.

That was Daddy Longlegs' chance. He hurried to one of the rear wheels. And in spite of the wind he clambered quickly up and hid himself in a corner of the wagon-box.

Meanwhile Sandy Chipmunk, spluttering and choking, managed to pull himself out of his unexpected bath and frisked out of

sight among the sumacs that fringed the road.

"Well, I stopped the wagon, anyhow!" he said to himself as he scampered away.

And that was just where he was mistaken. The old horse Ebenezer wanted a drink. That was why he had paused at the trough. He thrust his muzzle deep into the cool spring-water and drank so long that Johnnie Green began to be worried, for fear he would burst.

But old Ebenezer wouldn't budge until he had drunk his fill. When he was ready (and not before) the wagon went rumbling up the road again, taking Johnnie Green and his grandmother home to the farmhouse—and likewise bearing Daddy Longlegs back to the stone wall, where little Mr. Chippy lived in the wild grapevine.

XV

A CALL ON A NEIGHBOR

Daddy Longlegs was delighted to be at home again. And Mr. Chippy—as well as other neighbors—remarked that they had never seen him so happy and cheerful.

Perhaps one reason for Daddy's good spirits was the fact that the wind no longer blew and he could venture abroad without being buffeted about.

He was so relieved by the change in the weather that it seemed to him there could be no danger anywhere.

Little did Daddy Longlegs dream that a great army was even then making plans to capture him. And still less did he

imagine that he was going to meet with a real adventure before the day was done.

Daddy Longlegs had so many pleasant ideas in his head that there was no room in it for any thought of danger. He had found that his neighbors considered him a hero, because he had ridden in Farmer Green's wagon. A good many of Daddy's friends rushed at once to the stone wall, to talk with him—as soon as they heard the news. And naturally he began to feel quite important.

"Weren't you frightened?" people asked him. "Weren't you afraid that the horse would run away?"

"Oh, no! I wasn't the least bit scared, though I admit it was a dangerous feat," Daddy Longlegs told them. Then he would strut and swagger about, trying to appear as if there wasn't a braver person than he in all Pleasant Valley. And

he talked about his wild ride to everybody that would listen to him.

At first Daddy's friends enjoyed hearing about his adventure. But he boasted so much about his bravery that his listeners soon grew tired of hearing him talk. And instead of his having many callers, it was not long before Daddy Longlegs found that nobody came near him, even to say howdy-do.

He endured his loneliness as long as he could, though he found it hard not to talk when he had so much to say. And feeling, at last, that he was in danger of choking over the babble that surged up from within him, Daddy Longlegs decided that he would go and call on Rusty Wren, who lived in the cherry tree near Farmer Green's bedroom window.

"Rusty will be glad to know of my ride in the wagon," Daddy thought. "And besides, I'd like to hear about his cousin's party, which I missed on account of the big wind." So off Daddy Longlegs started, the moment the idea popped into his head. He was the least bit uneasy, perhaps, for fear Rusty Wren might not be at home, in which case he would have nobody to talk to except

Rusty's wife. And everybody knew that she was a person of uncertain temper.

But Daddy found Rusty perched on the tin roof of his house (his house was made of a maple-syrup can). And the first thing that Daddy Longlegs said to him was this: "Is your wife at home?"

That may seem a strange question. But Rusty Wren appeared to know what his caller meant. Anyhow, Rusty said, "No!" in such a cheerful tone that Daddy Longlegs knew they could have a good chat without being disturbed.

XVI

BOASTFUL TALK

I suppose you've heard of my great adventure?" Daddy Longlegs began, as soon as he learned that Rusty Wren was alone—that is, alone except for his six growing children inside the house. "No doubt you know all about my daring deed?"

"Why, no!" Rusty Wren replied, looking at his caller with no little wonder—for he had always believed Daddy Longlegs to be one of the mildest and most timid of all the field-people. "What have you been doing?" Rusty asked.

"Something that you've never done!"

Daddy Longlegs told him proudly. "I took a ride in Farmer Green's wagon yesterday, after the old horse Ebenezer!"

"Yes! yes! Go on!" Rusty urged him. "What happened to you?"

"What happened to me!" cried Daddy Longlegs. "I should think that *riding in a wagon* was adventure enough for anyone, without any other sort of danger added to it."

But Rusty Wren didn't agree with him.

"Riding in a wagon is nothing," he declared. "Farmer Green rides in one almost every day. And as for it's being dangerous, there's only the danger that you'll be late arriving at the place where you're going—especially if you have to depend on old Ebenezer to take you. He's several thousand times my size; yet I can fly further in a day than he can trot in two weeks."

Well, Rusty's scoffing remarks made Daddy Longlegs quite peevish. He had come to Rusty's house in order to boast. And of course he was disappointed when he found that Rusty Wren did not think him a hero at all.

"We'll say no more about the matter," Daddy observed stiffly. "I can see that you are jealous. And I always make it a rule not to dispute with jealous people."

Rusty Wren couldn't help feeling somewhat ashamed. He realized that perhaps he had not been very polite to his caller. "I meant no harm," he ventured "And if you want to change the subject, I've no objection."

"Very well!" Daddy Longlegs replied. "Let's talk about your cousin's party at Black Creek. I was sorry not to be present at it. But the high wind prevented me from travelling that day."

Then it was Rusty Wren's turn to look disappointed.

"There wasn't any party," he said. "Old Mr. Crow was mistaken. My cousin's party took place exactly a year earlier. So Mr. Crow was twelve months late with his news."

When he heard that, Daddy Longlegs couldn't help laughing right in Rusty Wren's face.

"I don't see any joke," Rusty snapped. "I can tell you that it's a good deal of a disappointment to have your mind all made up for a party, and then find that there is none."

"Perhaps you're right," said Daddy Longlegs. "Anyhow, I'm glad now that there was a wind that day, because the wind prevented my walking all the way to Black Creek for nothing."

"Well, there's no wind now to keep you from walking anywhere you want to go," said Rusty Wren slyly. He hoped that Daddy Longlegs would take the hint—and leave, for he did not care to talk with him any longer. Besides, it was time for Rusty to feed his six growing children.

Soon, to Rusty's relief, Daddy Longlegs began to creep down the trunk of the cherry tree.

If he had known what was in store for him he might not have left just then.

XVII

DADDY IS ATTACKED

When Daddy Longlegs went to call on Rusty Wren he did not know that a whole army had planned to capture him. But it was true, nevertheless, that a plot had been hatched against him. Now, right beneath the big old cherry tree where Rusty had his home there lived a colony of ants. And it was Rusty's habit—and his wife's, as well—to enjoy an occasional meal (or a light luncheon) by capturing and eating such ants as were not spry enough to keep out of harm's way.

Such actions only served to make the Wren family heartily disliked by every member of the ant colony. But there was nothing the ants could do except to try to be careful. And they were so angry that since they

were powerless to harm the Wrens, they were quite ready and eager to vent their spite on Rusty's smaller friends.

That was the reason why they had determined to attack Daddy Longlegs at the very first opportunity.

Yes! The members of the ant colony had made up their minds to capture Daddy the next time he should visit Rusty Wren. And the ant army of fierce fighters was all prepared for a terrible battle. Each day sentinels took their posts and stayed on watch, ready to give the alarm the moment Daddy Longlegs came hobbling through the grass near the foot of the cherry tree.

And when, at last, Daddy fell into the trap, on the day that he visited Rusty to boast about his wagon ride, the news of his arrival spread like wildfire.

The ants had not said a word to Daddy as he passed their home and climbed up the cherry tree. They allowed him to go unharmed. But while he was high up in the tree chatting with Rusty Wren, ants

hurried back to their stronghold from every direction. And in a surprisingly short time the whole army was ready and waiting—waiting for Daddy Longlegs to descend to the ground.

When he had finished his call, Daddy Longlegs left the cherry tree and started homeward. But he had not gone more than a few inches when the ant army sprang out of the ground as if by magic.

The soldiers were all around Daddy before he realized what was happening. And then he saw that it was too late for

him to turn back and try to escape by climbing the tree again.

Being a timid person, he took fright at once. And looking up toward Rusty Wren's house he cried, "Help! help!" in a terror-stricken voice.

But Daddy's shrieks brought no answer. Rusty Wren had flown away to find food for his hungry children. The ant sentinels had seen him leave. And they knew that they had nothing to fear from that quarter.

As the army closed in around him, Daddy Longlegs thought that he had never been in such danger in all his life before. The army was so near him that he could have seen the whites of the soldier's eyes—if they had had any whites.

XVIII

THE ANT ARMY

Urged on by their leaders, the ant soldiers dashed upon meek, frightened Daddy Longlegs. On all sides they crowded about him. And as he looked down at his swarming enemies and saw how fiercely they rushed at him, his knees began to tremble just as they did when a strong wind was blowing.

Poor Daddy stood helplessly waiting for the worst to happen. He expected any moment to feel himself pulled down and thrown upon the ground. But strange to say, in spite of the uproar and the mad charge of Daddy's enemies, nothing of the kind occurred. Soon it became clear that the ant army was in some sort of trouble. Although the leaders drove the soldiers at Daddy Longlegs with frantic cries, the army

merely surged backwards and forwards around him.

And Daddy had not received as much as a slap on the wrist from a single one of the attacking party.

Seeing that his forces were making no headway against the enemy, General Antenna, who commanded the entire army, called to one of the captains.

"What's the trouble, Captain Kidd?" the General demanded. "Our soldiers don't seem to be doing any damage."

Of course, you must click your heels together when a General speaks to you. And naturally that took Captain Kidd some time to do, because it is no easy matter to click your heels together when you have six feet.

Perhaps it was only to be expected that General Antenna should quickly become impatient.

The Ant Soldiers Rushed at Daddy

"Why don't you answer?" the General shouted. "We'll lose the battle if we're not careful!"

Then Captain Kidd had to stop and salute the General. And that took time, too. For how could anyone touch his cap when he had lost it somewhere?

Luckily, General Antenna soon saw what was the matter, and said:

"Here—take my cap!" And the General promptly clapped a gold-braided cap upon the Captain's head.

Then Captain Kidd was able to salute. And after that—and not before—the brave officer was ready to answer the General's inquiry.

Yes! Captain Kidd was all ready to reply. But by that time the Captain had quite forgotten what the question was.

Fortunately, General Antenna remembered, and repeated it.

"What's the trouble?"

"Oh, yes!" said the Captain. "The trouble is this: Our soldiers can't reach the enemy. Daddy Longlegs is so tall that they can't touch anything except his feet!"

Taking a careful look at the battle-field, the General saw that it was so. But still the commander of the army was not dismayed.

"Can't you tip him over?"

"We've tried to already," replied Captain Kidd. "But he has too many legs for us."

"Can't your soldiers stand on one another's shoulders?"

"It's no use," the Captain answered. "We've tried that too."

General Antenna began to look somewhat worried, knowing that if the army couldn't win the battle before Rusty Wren came home, all would be lost. For no army of ants could stand and fight such a monster as he.

"I have it!" the General cried at last. "I've thought of the very thing.... Bring some stepladders!"

XIX

DADDY ESCAPES

That was a fine idea of General Antenna's—that plan of bringing stepladders, so that the ant army might climb up on them and reach Daddy Longlegs, whom they were attacking.

And Captain Kidd told the General on the spot that it was a most happy thought.

"Then do as I tell you, at once!" the General ordered pompously.

"I can't!" said Captain Kidd, who was terribly frightened, because the General was sure to be angry.

"*Can't!*" cried General Antenna fiercely.

"*Can't!* What do you mean, madam?" (Perhaps you did not know that

Captain Kidd was a lady, as were also the General and the whole army, too!)

Captain Kidd's voice broke as she stammered an answer to General Antenna's rude demand.

"I know of only one stepladder in Pleasant Valley," she explained. "It belongs to Farmer Green. And it's so heavy that the whole army couldn't move it."

At that a shudder passed over General Antenna's fat body.

"Then we're as good as lost!" she shrieked. "Daddy Longlegs will defeat us. And I'll never hear the last of it."

And right there on the edge of the battle-field General Antenna shed so many bitter tears that Captain Kidd had to

move aside slightly, to keep her feet from getting wet.

"Don't weep!" cried the Captain in a husky voice. "It's not your fault—really!"

"Whose is it, then?" asked the General brokenly.

"Why, Farmer Green is to blame, of course!" Captain Kidd replied. "If he hadn't made his stepladder so big we might have used it and won the battle just as easily as not."

"That's so!" the General agreed, drying her tears on a lace handkerchief. "And from this time forth, Farmer Green and I are deadly enemies!"

Meanwhile the battle still raged furiously. But Daddy Longlegs had not received a single wound. And perceiving, at last, that he was quite unharmed, he took heart again.

Finally it occurred to him that the ant army was totally unable to reach him, borne high in the air as he was by his long legs. And as his fear left him, he could think of no reason why he should stay where he was any longer.

Accordingly he pulled himself together and began to walk away. He moved right

through the ant army; and the soldiers were powerless to stop him.

Just then General Antenna happened to glance over the battle-field. And her sad look at once gave way to one of great joy. She even gave Captain Kidd a hearty slap on the back—much to that lady's distress (because it knocked her cap awry).

"Look!" cried the General. "We've won the battle after all; for the enemy is retreating! Daddy Longlegs is running away!"

Hurrying off then, General Antenna joined her army, and told her soldiers that they had shown themselves to be very brave, and that as a reward they might each have an extra drink of milk that night with their supper.

There was great rejoicing in the ant colony that evening. And General Antenna caused the news of the victory to be carried throughout Pleasant Valley.

But when he heard it, after he reached home, Daddy Longlegs laughed merrily.

"Why, they never touched me!" he exclaimed.

XX

LOST—A JACKKNIFE!

Johnnie Green couldn't find his new jackknife anywhere. Since it was the third knife Johnnie had lost that summer, anyone might think that he wouldn't have cared much, being so used to losing jackknives.

But Johnnie had been particularly proud of that knife. It had two blades, a small saw, a corkscrew, a gimlet, a leather-punch, and a hook for pulling a stone out of the hoof of the old horse Ebenezer.

Johnnie had worked in the hayfield on many hot days to earn enough to buy that knife. So it was no wonder that he wanted to find it. He hunted for it carefully—in the woodshed (where he had gone for an armful of wood), in the barn (where he had

helped milk the cows that morning), and under the big oak in the dooryard (into which he had chased the cat). And not finding his knife in any of those places, he went into the pantry, for he remembered getting some jam and cookies there between breakfast and dinner-time.

The jackknife was not in the pantry. Johnnie even looked for it inside the cookie-jar. And failing to find the knife there, he consoled himself by taking three more cookies. Then he slipped out of the house and sat down behind the stone wall to enjoy his lunch.

All the time he was munching his cookies Johnnie Green was trying to recall exactly what he had done and where he had been since he jumped out of bed that morning. If there was any place he had forgotten, he intended to go there at once and look for his lost jackknife.

Having swallowed the last crumb of his goodies, Johnnie leaned back against the stone wall and closed his eyes in thought.

He wondered if there wasn't some out-of-the-way nook he had visited that day.

As he sat there, something tickled his ear. Then it tickled his cheek—and finally his nose.

Johnnie Green couldn't help sneezing. And opening his eyes, whom should he see but Daddy Longlegs, standing on the tip of his nose.

"My goodness!" Daddy exclaimed when Johnnie Green sneezed. "I didn't think the wind was going to blow to-day.

But there's an awful blast! I'd better hurry home at once."

He had scarcely turned to go back where he came from when Johnnie sat up; and seizing his visitor quickly—but carefully—Johnnie removed him from his perch and held him, a captive, in his hands.

When he stepped from a stone to Johnnie's head Daddy Longlegs had no idea that he was not walking on another stone. Who

would have expected to find the head of a boy lying motionless against a wall?

As soon as he recovered from his surprise, Daddy Longlegs struggled to escape. But his captor guarded him with great pains.

"You don't think I'm going to let you get away, do you?" Johnnie Green asked him.

XXI

JUST A NOTION

In common with all the other youngsters that went to school in the little red school-house, Johnnie Green thought that Daddy Longlegs and every one of his relations had a strange power.

Yes! Johnnie believed that if you happened to be lost in the woods, you would need only to find Daddy Longlegs, or one of his cousins, and he would point out the way home for you, if you asked him. Or if you wanted to recover something you had lost, you could surely find it with the help of any one of Daddy Longlegs' family.

So that was the reason why Johnnie Green was glad to see Daddy just at that time. Having lost his new jackknife, Johnnie was

determined that Daddy should tell him where to find it.

"Now, you listen to me!" Johnnie commanded, frowning severely at Daddy. "I've dropped my knife somewhere and you must point towards it if you want me to let you go.

"I'll tell you what it's like," he continued, "so you won't make any mistake. It has two blades, and a saw, and a corkscrew, and a gimlet, and a leather-punch, and a hook to use on a horse's hoof. It's the best knife I've ever owned. And I'd be pretty angry if you sent me off the wrong way to find a jackknife that wasn't nearly so good."

Now, Daddy Longlegs was angry himself. He thought that Johnnie Green had no business to make him a prisoner. And as for knowing where the lost knife was, he hadn't the faintest idea where it could be.

"I can't tell you anything about your old jackknife!" Daddy cried. It was really a new knife, as Johnnie had explained to him. But

you must remember that Daddy Longlegs was in a terrible temper.

Unfortunately Daddy's voice was entirely too tiny for Johnnie Green to hear. And meanwhile Daddy continued to tug and twist, trying to free himself from Johnnie Green's grasp. His eight legs kept reaching out in all directions for firmer footholds.

Silly Johnnie Green thought that he was trying to point the way to the missing knife!

"Stop!" Johnnie cried. "Take your time and don't get excited! If you keep motioning with all your legs at once you can't expect me to understand what you mean."

Soon after that Daddy became quieter, though it was only because he grew tired from his efforts to escape. But he was so angry and so worried that one of his legs kept twitching; and it felt so queer that Daddy Longlegs had to stretch it again and again.

"Ah! That's better!" Johnnie Green exclaimed then. "Now you're pointing

plainly enough. I know now that you're trying to tell me to walk right towards the sweet apple tree if I want to find my knife. And I'm obliged to you, Mr. Daddy Longlegs! Thank you very much!"

Then Johnnie let go his prisoner, who crept quickly into a crevice of the stone wall, where he stayed for a long time.

As for Johnnie Green, he scrambled spryly over the wall and began to move in a bee line toward the sweet apple tree. He walked slowly and searched the ground with great care. But he saw no sign of his precious knife.

Beneath the sweet apple tree Johnnie paused mournfully.

"He was only fooling me!" he exclaimed. "That old Daddy Longlegs played a trick on me!"

Johnnie just couldn't help feeling disappointed. And he just couldn't help feeling hungry as well. Luckily there were apples on the old tree. So he began to shin up into its branches.

And then all at once he saw his beautiful knife sticking into the tree-trunk right before his eyes.

Johnnie remembered then that he had visited the sweet apple tree soon after breakfast that very day, when he had happened to feel hungry. And he had stuck the knife there himself and gone off and forgotten it.

With a shout of joy he gripped its horn handle and pulled it out.

"Old Daddy Longlegs knew what he was about after all!" he shouted.

And Johnnie Green never guessed that his finding his jackknife was nothing but an accident. Daddy had never even seen it. And if he had, he wouldn't have known what it was.

But after that Johnnie was more convinced than ever that Daddy Longlegs had a strange power.

XXII

WHY DADDY WAS CHANGED

It was after his adventure with Johnnie Green that Daddy Longlegs' neighbors first noticed something queer about him.

They knew that he was not the same. But strangely enough, no two of them could agree as to what had changed him. Chirpy Cricket said that he thought that Daddy was wearing a new coat, for his coat-tails seemed to flap differently when he walked. Buster Bumblebee claimed that Daddy had bought himself a new hat which tipped at an unusual angle. And little Mrs. Ladybug insisted that Daddy's odd look was due to nothing more or less than some new checked trousers. She remembered, she said, that he had always worn striped ones before.

Those were the opinions of only three of Daddy's friends. It seemed as if everybody in Pleasant Valley had his own idea about the reason why Daddy was changed.

Naturally, many disputes arose, because everyone declared that his own notion was the right one. And at last several excited persons went to old Mr. Crow and asked him to settle the trouble.

But Mr. Crow would have nothing to do with the affair. He did not like Daddy Longlegs. And he said he preferred not to think about him at all.

That was something of a setback for the company, until somebody said, "Let's go and ask Solomon Owl! There's no

one in Pleasant Valley that looks so wise as he!"

So they hurried off to the hemlock woods where Solomon Owl lived. He was at home. And he listened carefully to each of his callers—although they all talked at once.

At last he shouted loudly for silence, though it was some time before he had it.

"Hush! hush!" some of the quieter ones said. "We want to hear what wise Mr. Solomon Owl says."

And then Solomon Owl spoke:

"If you want to know what's the matter with Daddy Longlegs why don't you go and ask him?"

Everybody exclaimed at once that that was a splendid plan. And thanking Mr. Owl for his excellent advice, the party hurried away.

When they reached the stone wall, later, they found Daddy Longlegs sunning himself. He seemed glad to see his callers. And when they asked him what it was that made him appear different, he threw back his head, as far as he could, and laughed heartily.

"Why—don't you know?" he said. "Can't you see I've lost a leg?"

Daddy's news made everyone gasp. And for a few moments not a soul could speak. But the callers all stared at Daddy. And then each one of them began to count aloud: "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven."

They were counting Daddy's legs. And after they had counted seven they all saw that his eighth leg was missing, that is, all but Buster Bumblebee. Being a blundering sort of person, he made a mistake and counted one leg twice. But the other callers soon set him right.

"It's no wonder you look different," Daddy's friends began telling him. "How did you meet with such an awful accident?"

"I lost my leg trying to escape from Johnnie Green," Daddy explained. "Either he pulled the leg off my body, or I pulled my body off the leg. I haven't been able to decide which way it happened."

"You must miss your leg terribly!" several of the company cried.

"Not at all!" replied Daddy Longlegs cheerfully, to the great surprise of all those

present. "I have seven legs left; and that ought to be enough for anybody. I should think."

But little Mrs. Ladybug couldn't help shuddering. "I think it's just too dreadful!" she cried. "Johnnie Green is a very careless boy."

"Oh, he didn't mean any harm, I know," Daddy Longlegs assured her. "He tried not to injure me.... But I'll admit there's one thing that has caused me a good deal of annoyance."

"What's that?" everyone asked.

"I had to get a new pair of seven-legged trousers," Daddy Longlegs explained. "And if any of you has ever tried to find such a garment at short notice he will understand that I've been in great trouble."

Then Daddy Longlegs wished his callers a pleasant afternoon and begged to be excused, on account of important business.

And as they watched him walk briskly away his neighbors all agreed that for a person

who had just lost a leg he seemed wonderfully spry.

XXIII

A NEW NAME FOR DADDY

Daddy Longlegs' neighbor, little Mr. Chippy, had an idea. And since he thought it a good one he at once arranged a meeting of a number of his friends who lived near him.

Among those present were Buster Bumblebee, Betsy Butterfly, Rusty Wren, and several others. They met in Farmer Green's apple orchard. And they all arrived there early because everybody was eager to know what Mr. Chippy had to say.

"My idea——" Mr. Chippy began——"my idea is this: since Daddy Longlegs is so changed, after losing one of his legs, we really ought to call him by a different name. Now that he has only seven legs—

instead of eight—it doesn't seem polite to say anything about *legs* in his hearing."

As Mr. Chippy paused and looked about him the whole company agreed that his idea was an excellent one.

"But I don't know where we're going to find a new name for him," said Buster Bumblebee, who never had many ideas of his own.

"That's easy!" Mr. Chippy told him. "I've thought of a splendid name. And I'm perfectly willing to let you use it.... It's *Grandfather Graybeard*!"

Most of the company clapped their hands when Mr. Chippy said that. But Buster Bumblebee spoke up and said that he didn't think much of that name, be cause Daddy Longlegs had no beard.

"Well, for all you know he may decide to wear one, any day," Mr. Chippy replied.

And then all the company applauded again —except Buster Bumblebee.

"How do you know Daddy Longlegs is a grandfather?" he asked Mr. Chippy.

"How do you know he isn't?" Mr. Chippy asked *him*.

And then everybody but Buster cried out that "Grandfather Graybeard" was a fine name for Daddy Longlegs. And many remarked that Daddy would be greatly pleased when he heard the news.

"Thank you!" said Mr. Chippy, making a low bow with his hand on his heart. "And now if it is the pleasure of the meeting I will go back to the stone wall at once and tell Daddy Longlegs what we have decided to do."

To Mr. Chippy's surprise a murmur of dissent greeted his proposal.

"What's the matter?" asked Mr. Chippy! "I thought you liked my idea."

"So we do!" Rusty Wren replied. "But we think it would be better if we *all* called on Daddy and explained to him about the change."

"Very well!" little Mr. Chippy answered. "The more the merrier! I'll be the spokesman. And I will suggest that we start for the stone wall right now, for there's no time like the present, you know."

Even Buster Bumblebee approved of Mr. Chippy's retort. And with that everybody started pell-mell for the stone wall.

XXIV

A BRIDEGROOM

Daddy Longlegs was taken entirely by surprise. It was rather early in the morning. And he had not expected callers—at least not so many as suddenly appeared at the stone wall where he was usually to be found.

Luckily he was arrayed in his very best clothes. Indeed, he was quite smartly dressed—for him. A bright yellow scarf, tied in a big bow beneath his chin, made him look almost dandified. And he was wearing a bottle-green coat, lined with pink.

"Goodness!" said Buster Bumblebee.

"He looks like a bridegroom!" But his companions all told him to hush, and not to be disrespectful to his elders.

"Good morning!" said Mr. Chippy to Daddy Longlegs. "We've come to tell you some good news. We're going to call you by a different name. And we hope you'll like it."

"I hope so!" Daddy Longlegs echoed. "What is it, please?"

"It's 'Grandfather Graybeard'!" little Mr. Chippy informed him with an air of pride.

"Why, that's a beautiful name!" Daddy Longlegs cried, as a look of pleasure crossed his face.

"I'm glad you think so," said Mr. Chippy. "It's only fair to tell you that I thought of it myself."

And then he called for "three cheers for Grandfather Graybeard!"

They gave them with a right good will.

And after the sound had died away Mr. Chippy said something in a whisper to Daddy.

"What is it?" Rusty Wren demanded. "What's he talking about?"

"He thinks we ought to give three cheers for him," Daddy Longlegs explained.

But before they had time to do that a large lady bustled out from the stone wall and walked straight up to Daddy Longlegs. She was one of his own kind, too. The whole company agreed to that, afterwards; because they had all counted her feet. And she had eight.

"What's this?" the newcomer demanded. "What's going on here, I should like to know?"

And Daddy Longlegs looked a bit uncomfortable as he explained that he had a new name, and told her what it was.

"You haven't given your consent, I hope?" she said.

"I'm afraid I have," Daddy replied meekly.

"Then withdraw it at once!" she commanded sharply. "I don't like this new name at all."

Poor Daddy Longlegs looked as if he wished he might sink into the ground and vanish. But since he couldn't do that, he stammered that he was much obliged to his friends for their kindness, but he really would have to insist that they call him by his old name, and he hoped they would understand.

But they didn't understand even then. And the whole company stood silent, with their mouths open, and watched Daddy Longlegs follow the strange lady away. She had beckoned to him. And he had started after her without a word of protest.

His friends noticed that she was considerably bigger than he was.

Well, they might have been standing there yet if little Mrs. Ladybug hadn't arrived just then, quite out of breath from hurrying.

And of course she wanted to know what had happened.

"For pity's sake!" she cried, after she had listened to the strange story. "Do you mean to say you haven't heard the news? Didn't you know that Daddy Longlegs had a new wife? Naturally, a *bride* wouldn't care to have her young husband known as 'Grandfather Graybeard.'"

"Ah! But he's very old!" said little Mr. Chippy.

"How do you know?" Mrs. Ladybug inquired.

Mr. Chippy had to admit that he had no means of knowing.

And then Mrs. Ladybug looked very wise.

"I have reason to believe," she said "that Daddy Longlegs is a much younger person than we have always supposed."

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THE END

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